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SUBJECT: SECRETARY CLINTON'S BANGKOK "TOWNINTERVIEW": SUBSTANTIVE,  
FUNNY AND WELL-RECEIVED

¶1. Summary: During Secretary Clinton's recent trip to Bangkok she participated in a one-hour hybrid media event organized by the Embassy Public Affairs Section. The "Townterview," as some have called it, combined both an exclusive interview and a town hall setting. The program was hosted by two of Thailand's leading broadcast journalists and will air on Channel 9 and the Nation Channel, which has a combined viewership of nearly 2.4 million people. The audience was made up of over 250 people, including university students, civil society leaders, government officials, and human rights activists -- all of whom were thrilled to see the Secretary in person. The venue for this special event was the majestic Thewarat Sapharom Throne Hall, built in 1909 on the grounds of the Phayathai Palace by King Rama V, which also served as a residence for Kings Rama VI and VII. The event received overwhelmingly positive media coverage, not only for its substantive policy discussions, but also due to the witty banter between Secretary Clinton and the co-hosts that created a comfortable, at-ease atmosphere that had the audience erupting in laughter throughout the Townterview. End Summary.

¶2. On July 22, the Secretary participated in a unique hybrid media/town hall event at the Phayathai Palace in Bangkok, Thailand. This "Townterview," which was hosted by well-known television personality Suthichai Yoon and his co-host Veenarat Laohapakakul, gave the Thai public in-depth insight into President Obama's foreign policy and highlighted the strong relationship between the U.S. and Thailand. Secretary Clinton provided an impressive overview of U.S. policies around the world with a focus on the ASEAN region, and served to reinforce the Secretary's comment the previous day that "the United States is back." The discussion also exemplified Secretary Clinton's warmth and personality, allowing her to raise important foreign policy matters and underscore key points that resonated with Thais, all with a delivery that showcased her clever wit and well-placed humor.

¶3. During the interview, the Secretary said that the key message to ASEAN "is that President Obama and I are giving great importance to this region." When asked about working for a President who was a former competitor, the Secretary commented "...in our country, when the election is over, we try to work together for the good of the country. And in our system, when the President asks you to serve, you feel that you really should because you want to help the President succeed."

¶4. Cultural and student exchanges were also highlighted during the interview when a student in the audience asked Secretary Clinton about U.S. policies that impact Thailand and Thai education. Secretary Clinton responded that educational and student exchanges are among the most important U.S.-Thai initiatives in this regard, and noted that she would like to see even more American students and faculty coming to Thailand, and Thai students and faculty going to the United States. One of the co-hosts then asked if this would mean more scholarships to send Thai students to the U.S. to which the audience laughed and applauded. The Secretary laughed in return and then responded that she would "like that very much."

¶5. Media coverage of Secretary Clinton's interview with Suthichai

Yoon was generous and positive with four local broadcast and seven local print outlets making mention of the event in their respective news coverage. Channel 9 aired a special 30-minute program of the interview during its July 22 evening lineup, while an additional 30 minutes of short news segments on the interview were aired throughout the day on Channel 9, Thai PBS, Channel 5, and The Nation Channel (combined viewership of approximately 4.6 million). The Secretary's interview received front page placement in the July 23 editions of five local dailies: Matichon, The Nation, Kom Chad Luek, Naew Na, and Krungthep Turakit (combined estimated circulation of approximately 380,000). Additional mention of the interview was made in top-circulating daily Thai Rath (estimated circulation of 1 million) and local daily ASTV Phujatkarn (estimated circulation of 80,000). Print news coverage ranged from half-page columns with photos and translated excerpts of the interview to short three-paragraph summaries of the hybrid media event. The Secretary's comments on Burma and North Korea received particular attention in print media, while broadcast media coverage touched on softer topics including her choice of a blue suit for the event and good-humored comments she made about her attempt at winning the U.S. presidency.

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